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CHRISTIAN MOURNING:

A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE

DEATH

OF

MRS. ISABELLA GRAHAM:

AND

PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH, THE 14th AUG. 1814.

BY J. M. MASON, D. D.

A gracious woman retaineth honour.—PROV. xi. 16.

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TO THE
REV. DR. JOHN B. ROMEYN,
AND
THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH UNDER HIS
PASTORAL CARE,
THE FOLLOWING
S E R M O N,
PREACHED AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE ELDERS,
IS INSCRIBED,
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THEIR MANY KINDNESSES TO HIMSELF,
AND THE PEOPLE TO WHOM HE MINISTERS ;
AND
AS A TOKEN OF THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESPECT
OF THEIR
OBLIGED AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,
J. M. MASON.

Warren-street, 22 August, 1814.



A SERMON,

&c.



1 THESS. iv. 13, 14.

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep ; that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

CHRISTIANITY founds her claim to general reception upon doctrines most abasing to human pride, and facts calculated rather to repel than to invite human credulity. Her cardinal *doctrine*, which all the rest subserve, is the justification of a sinner, his deliverance from the bondage of his sin, and perfect happiness in heaven, through faith in a Saviour who himself fell a victim to his enemies ; and expired, as a malefactor, under the infamy of the cross. Nothing more repugnant to their preconceived notions was ever proclaimed in the ears of men. It is the object of their dislike, their derision, and their scorn. “ We preach,” says the Apostle,

“ we preach Christ crucified ; unto the Jews a
 “ stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolish-
 “ ness*!” So it was at the beginning ; so it is at
 the present hour ; and so it will remain to the
 end.

The cardinal *fact* of Christianity, without
 which all her other facts lose their importance,
 is the resurrection, from the dead, of this same
 crucified Saviour, as the prelude, the pattern,
 and the pledge of the resurrection of his follow-
 ers to eternal life. Against this great fact the
 “ children of disobedience,” from the Pharisees
 of Jerusalem down to the scoffers of New-York,
 have levelled their batteries. One assails its
 proof ; another, its reasonableness ; all, its truth.
 When Paul asserted it before an audience of
 Athenian philosophers, “ some mocked”—a
 short method of refuting the Gospel ; and likely,
 from its convenience, to continue in favour and
 in fashion.

Yet with such doctrines and facts did the
 religion of Jesus make her way through the
 world. Against the superstition of the mul-
 titude—against the interest, influence, and craft
 of their priesthood—against the ridicule of wits,
 the reasoning of sages, the policy of cabinets,
 and the prowess of armies—against the axe,

the cross, and the stake, she extended her conquests from Jordan to the Thames. She gathered her laurels alike upon the snows of Scythia, the green fields of Europe, and the sands of Africa. The altars of impiety crumbled before her march—the glimmer of the schools disappeared in her light—Power felt his arm wither at her glance ; and, in a short time, she who went, forlorn and insulted, from the hill of Calvary to the tomb of Joseph, ascended the Imperial throne, and waved her banner over the palace of the Cæsars. Her victories were not less benign than decisive. They were victories over all that pollutes, degrades, and ruins man ; in behalf of all that purifies, exalts, and saves him. They subdued his understanding to truth, his habits to rectitude, his heart to happiness. In an appeal to that of which they were unexceptionable judges, their own experience, Paul thus exclaims to the believers of Thessalonica : “ They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you ; and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ; and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come*.”

The change from “ Pagan to Christian charac-

ter ; from midnight "darkness" to "light in the Lord," was abundantly visible, and not to be explained but upon the principles of Christianity itself. Yet, without detracting from its magnitude, or from the glory of those divine influences which produced it, we may be allowed to question whether we are not prone to look upon the primitive converts as having reached an eminence in knowledge and purity, consistent, under their circumstances, neither with the general laws of our nature, nor with the testimony of holy writ. Falling far short of them in zeal, in love, in promptitude of action, in patience of suffering, we regard them as a sort of human angels with whom we may not venture to claim connexion. But when emotion yields to thought, and reason balances facts, we recover from the fond illusion. We see them to have been "men of like passions" with ourselves ; subject to erroneous conceptions, to rash judgments, to groundless fears, to irregular conduct. Let the Thessalonian Christians be our example. Collected from Jews and Gentiles they could not rid themselves, at once, of their old prepossessions. Now and then, the Jewish tradition or the Pagan feeling would obtrude into the sanctuary of their "consolation in Christ." Some of them, led by a then popular opinion, that their Lord was shortly to appear ; and tinctured with the doctrine of

the Rabbins, mourned over the supposed diminution of happiness to their friends who had died without beholding the glorious advent of the Messiah's reign. Others, through the recurrence of early impressions, the objections of their Heathen neighbours, and, it may be, the assiduities of false teachers, seem to have been drawn into doubts concerning the resurrection itself, and, of course, the safety of their friends who had died in faith. The native tendency of such apprehensions was to weigh down their spirits; to check their ardour; to shake their constancy under persecution; and to make them, instead of being "faithful unto the death," begin to think themselves "of all men the most miserable."

To rectify their mistake and establish them under their trial, is the design of the text. And although it was originally addressed to the Thessalonians; yet it is the common property of Christians; and was "written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Let us, then, ponder its import. In general it contains an affectionate *counsel*, with the *reasons* thereof, against depression of heart at the death of believing friends.

I. The counsel of the text is, so to cherish the knowledge of the gospel, as that our hearts

shall not be depressed by the death of believers ; but that there shall be an immeasurable distance between our grief and the grief of unbelievers. *I would not, says Paul, have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep ; that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.*

That we may have a correct view of the importance of this counsel, let us briefly develope its leading principles.

Death is, in itself, a most serious and distressful event. It is nature's supreme evil—the abhorrence of God's creation—a monster from whose touch and sight every living thing recoils. So that to shrink from its ravages upon ourselves or upon those whom we love, is not an argument of weakness, but an act of obedience to the first law of being—a tribute to the value of that life which is our Maker's gift.

The disregard which some of old affected to whatever goes by the name of evil ; the insensibility of others who yield up their souls to the power of fatalism ; and the artificial gayety which has, occasionally, played the comedian about the dying bed of “ philosophy, falsely so called,” are outrages upon decency and nature. Death destroys both action and enjoyment—mocks at wisdom, strength, and beauty—disar-

ranges our plans—robs us of our treasures—desolates our bosoms—breaks our heart-strings—blasts our hope. Death extinguishes the glow of kindness—abolishes the most tender relations of man—severs him from all that he knows and loves—subjects him to an ordeal which thousands of millions have passed, but none can explain ; and which will be as new to the last who gives up the ghost, as it was to murdered Abel—flings him, in fine, without any avail from the experience of others, into a state of untried being. No wonder that nature trembles before it. Reason justifies the fear. Religion never makes light of it : and he who does, instead of ranking with heroes, can hardly deserve to rank with a brute.

Yet it is not the amount of actual suffering inflicted by the loss of those who are dear to us as our own souls, that constitutes the chief pain of the privation. Death might “come up into our “windows;” might rend from our embraces, and bear away, amidst our unavailing lamentations, all that our tenderest affections cling to here below ; and the stroke would fall with comparative lightness, were its effect but temporary. It is from futurity that Grief, like Consolation, derives her power. The tears of separation will the more easily dry up, and be succeeded by the calm of cheerfulness, when we expect to

regain what we have lost. But when there is no such expectation; when the treasure ravished from us can neither be restored nor replaced; it is then that nature sickens, and joy descends to the tomb. Ah! who can paint the anguish of the *last* look! Who can endure, at parting, the distractions of that word, *for ever*! Who, that has any thought of hereafter—that but inclines to the belief that man dieth not as a beast dieth, can sustain the rackings of wild uncertainty, unable to surmise whither the beloved one is gone, and to what condition of being?

This was the state of the poor Pagans; “others,” “the rest,” “those that art without,” as the apostle terms them. In the death of their friends they had no hope. Not that they were altogether without the notion of the existence of a soul detached from its body, or of happiness in a life to come. Tradition, fortified by the yearnings of nature, had preserved among the vulgar, the poets, and a few sober philosophers, something of distant kin to the truth. But all their conceptions were so obscure, so unwarranted, and therefore so unsatisfying, that they were rather the confused images of a dream, than the clear representations of waking vision. They were sufficient to agitate without convincing—they possessed the torments of anxiety, without the possibility of certainty: and the hope

which they fostered, was, for every purpose of consolation and peace, no hope at all.

1. They *knew* nothing, whatever they might conjecture, of the state of departed man. Whether his soul, his vital and rational principle, survives the body—whether it remains conscious after death—whether, if conscious, it possesses any power of retrospect over earthly scenes—whether it is immortal—whether it enters, in its new mode of being, upon a fixed state of sorrow or joy, of shame or honour.—On all these points the heathen were ignorant; although many of them were not quite so unconcerned as numbers who enjoy the pure light of the gospel, and boast of their liberal attainments; but with whom, in that great and terrible day of the Lord, the worst of the Pagans would be unwilling to change places.

2. With the resurrection of the body the heathen were absolutely unacquainted. Flesh and blood could not reveal it to them. There are sighings, misgivings, reverential feelings towards the dead, analogies of nature, which eagerly fall in with the doctrine of the resurrection once made known: but which could never lead to the discovery, or even suspicion, of its truth. The apostles who taught it, until God opened the eyes of their hearers, were regarded as fanatics. In respect to the *body*, therefore, Death brought

with him into every Pagan house, dejection, horror, black despondence.

Under these circumstances, what shall arrest the current of "mourning, and lamentation, and "wo?" Where is the voice of the comforter? or what bosom can find room for comfort, which affords no entrance to hope? Oh! it is despair that kills!

Such was Paganism bending over the remains of a deceased friend. Such, too, was Judaism, after it had rejected "the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof." Such are still the millions, whether of Gentiles or Jews, who know not God.

And wherein have unbelievers among ourselves the pre-eminence? What have ^{unbelievers} ~~(they)~~ to gild their evening hour, to bind up their aching head, to soothe their labouring heart? What living hope descends from heaven to smile on the sinking features, whisper peace to the retiring spirit, and announce to the sad surrounding relatives that all is well? There is none! Astonishment, dismay, melancholy boding, are the "portion of their cup". Sit down, ye unhappy, in the desolation of grief. Consolation heard the voice of your weeping: she hastened to your door, but started back affrighted; her commission extends not to *your* house of mourning; ye have no hope!

But, Christians, believers in the Lord Jesus, *your* condition is widely different, and so must be *your* carriage. You, too, must resign, many of you have already resigned, some of you very recently, your believing friends to the stroke of Death. You must feel, have felt, the pang of separation. You are not forbidden to mourn. The smitten heart will bleed, the workings of nature must have vent. It is right. Tears were not made that they should never be shed: nor the passion of grief implanted only to be stifled. God's gifts to us in the persons of those whom he animates with his love, beautifies with his image, and honours with his communion, are too precious to be relinquished without emotion. It would be a strange way of glorifying him for the best of his earthly blessings, to behave, when they are removed, as if they were not worth one thought. Nor could there be a fouler stain upon the religion of the cross, than a tendency to extinguish affections calculated, in a peculiar manner, to lessen the evils of our miserable world. No! the "grace which bringeth salvation" does not destroy, but restore, the man. All that belongs to him, excepting sin and its effects, she acknowledges, regulates, exalts. Jesus, the perfection of moral beauty, Jesus himself wept at the tomb of his friend. He has dignified as well as vindic-

cated, by his example, the most sacred of our social feelings. And if we, sharing his sympathy, weep at the tomb of those who are not less his friends than our own, instead of falling beneath the level of profane fortitude, we rise up to the grandeur of fellowship with the "man of sorrows."

Settle it, therefore, Christian brethren, as a principle not to be shaken, that your religion disclaims alike all kindred with apathy and with frenzy. Mourn you may when the "desire of your eyes" goes down to the dust; but you must not mourn as those "who have no hope." For hope, even the sweetest hope that can lodge in the human breast, is yours. Let your mourning, therefore, be tempered, submissive, holy. Yield not to brooding sadness. Transfer your tears from the cold face of your friend to the feet of your master, and there compose your souls to serenity and peace. This is evangelical counsel; the counsel of my text. On what grounds it is offered; the reason why it should have a complete ascendancy over our minds, is the

II. part of discourse.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

The grounds of our consolation with respect to departed saints are, the nature of their death—their condition in and after it—and the prospect of their glorious resurrection.

1. The very nature of Death, as it comes to believers, is a source of satisfaction; an antidote to excessive sorrow. They *sleep*.

Not that we are to imagine, with some dreaming speculatists, that the souls of the righteous remain unconscious and torpid during the period which elapses between the death and resurrection of their bodies. This cheerless doctrine, desirable to those only whose hearts have never been warmed by the love of Christ, was far enough from the faith and the theology of Paul. He had no cause to congratulate the church, as he does in the 12th chap. of his epistle to the Hebrews, on her coming “to the spirits of just men made perfect,” if, instead of “beholding the face of God in light and glory,” they are inert and insensible as a clod. Nor could he who longed to “depart and be with Christ,” accounting it the same thing to be “absent from the body,” and “to be present with the Lord,” suppose that all his faculties and affections were to be suspended; and all his opportunities of serving his adorable Redeemer to be taken away, by death, for scores of centuries together. The

Lord have mercy upon them for whom such a prospect has any charms !

The apostle's words have quite another sound in the ears of faith—they are fraught with consolation fragrant as the breath of the morning, refreshing as the dews of heaven. It is true—a delightful truth—that the bodies of the saved, which at death their souls leave in order to be with Jesus, do rest in their graves. But it is chiefly in reference to their happy decease—their safe and comfortable departure, combined as it is with the death of the body, that the scriptures say, they *sleep*. Blessed assurance ! Hear its admonitions.

1st. Death brings no *peril* to a child of God ; and ought to be no more an object of his fear than the approach of sleep at the close of day. I speak not of the physical pangs of dying, which relate to our animal perceptions, and to which our animal part never can nor should be reconciled. I speak of death as affecting our *moral* being. In this view he is rightly named the “ *king of terrors* ;” because, to ungodly men he is the “ wages of sin.” It is from guilt that he draws his terrifying power. He announces to the wicked the end of their respite ; the filling up of their cup ; “ a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which “ shall devour the adversaries ;” and if they be

not alarmed, if their faces gather not blackness, and their bosoms horror, it is because they are "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Their stupidity will only heighten the surprise and consternation of the eternal world. But Jesus having delivered his people from the wrath to come, delivered them by the blood of his cross, has for them stripped Death of his terrors, and given them authority to cry, as he hands them over the threshold of life, "O Death where is thy sting? the sting of Death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" In such a case death deserves not the name. It is but a sleep; sleep in its most heavenly form; sleep in Jesus.

2d. Death is to believers a *cessation from their toils and griefs*, even as sleep is a repose from fatigue.

"We who are in this tabernacle do groan," while the day lasts we must bear its burden and its heat. I shall not dwell upon the pains and endurances of a Christian soldier—his fight of faith—his race for the prize—his conflict with flesh and blood; and what is more, with principalities and powers—his weakness, his weariness, his wounds, his faintings, his falls, his recoveries; in a word, his many and great vicissitudes. The point

before us is, the *end*—it is peace. So saith the word of our God: “He shall enter into peace; “they shall rest in their beds; each one that “walketh in his uprightness*.” To others death is, emphatically, the beginning of sorrows—to a Christian, the termination. Grief and he have parted. The hour of release is come. He bids adieu to the field of battle. He puts off his harness; and “knowing that his labour “shall not be in vain,” he lays his head on the bosom of the Captain of his salvation, and goes quietly to sleep. “Blessed are the dead “who die in the Lord, that they may rest from “their labours and their works do follow them†.” Thus, in the nature of a believer’s death there is ample reason why we should not be swallowed up of over much sorrow. He sleeps.

2. His condition in and after death is another spring of our consolation. He sleeps in *Jesus*. Here we ascertain two momentous truths.

1st. Death, which dissolves every other tie, touches not our union with the Lord Christ. Even then his saints are in him: as much the “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his “bones,” as when they were serving him in their mortal life. Seest thou that breathless corse? It was, but a moment ago, the abode of a spirit

* Is. lvi. 2.

† Rev. xiv. 13.

now glorified with Christ. It was also an abode of the Divine Spirit. "Know ye not," saith Paul, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost*?" The human spirit is fled: but shall death, suppose ye, expel the Spirit of God from his own temple? No, he still resides in it, and will keep it for himself. Change it shall. The process of taking it down has already begun. It must descend to dust. It must see corruption. But, notwithstanding, it is the Saviour's property; a part of that whole person which is inseparably one with him. It is an object of his care and love. He does not scruple to call the church's dead *his* own body†. This makes their dust precious; and that which he values shall not be worthless in our eyes.

2d. From their sleeping *in Jesus*, we ascertain that all the rights and privileges which belong to believers in virtue of their union with him, remain to them, after death, undiminished and unimpaired. Dead they are, but they are dead in Christ. They are as much comprehended in his covenant; summed up in him as their head; represented by him as their advocate who has all their claims in his hand for their benefit, as they possibly could be, when, here on earth, they lived by faith, walked by faith, suffered in faith,

* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† Is. xxxiv. 12.

drew near to God by faith in his blood. Whatever is meant by being in Christ, is meant of them now they are dead; and shall be made good to them at his appearing. *They sleep in Jesus.*

3. We derive consolation under the death of Christian friends from the prospect of their *glorious resurrection*. *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

Whatever have been the disputes about other doctrines of Christianity, no man can deny that it teaches the resurrection of the body. The very gates of Hell, in the shape of that unhallowed philosophy which fritters away its most precious truths into Eastern metaphors and Jewish allegories, have not ventured to tamper with the faith of the resurrection. This stands confest a Christian peculiarity. Let us contemplate its nature and proof as displayed in the text.

1st. This clay which we commit to the grave, under that universal sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," will be quickened again, and reassume, even after the slumber of ages, the organization, the lineaments, the expression, of that self-same human being with whom we were conversant upon earth. Otherwise it were a new creation and not a resurrec-

tion; and will be reanimated by that self-same spirit which forsook it at death; otherwise it were a different being altogether, and not the one with whom, under that form, we held sweet communion in this life; and walked to the house of God in company. It has, indeed, been questioned whether Christian friends shall know each other in the world of the risen. But why not? Did not the disciples know the Lord Jesus after his resurrection? Did they not know him at the moment of his ascension? Shall the body which he wore upon earth be the only one recognized in heaven? If Peter and Paul, if James and John shall not be able to distinguish each other, upon what principle shall they be able to distinguish their Lord? And why should the body be raised at all, if the associations with which its re-appearance is connected are to be broken and lost? It cannot be—But then,

2d. The body will be raised under circumstances, and with properties suited to the new state of being and action on which the saints shall enter. God shall bring them with the Lord Christ.

They shall be found in Christ's *train*. He will set them on his right hand in the face of Heaven. He will present them to his father, as the "sons whom he was appointed to bring

unto glory," saying, *Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me.*

They shall be adorned with Christ's *likeness*. "Beloved! it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The change requisite for this exaltation shall pass upon their body without destroying its sameness—as "flesh and blood, it cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But every obstacle shall be surmounted. If "it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption"—if "it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory"—if "it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power"—if "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body"*—fit for the occupations and enjoyments of the heavenly world.

Finally, believers, in their raised bodies, shall be *partakers of Christ's glory* in the judgment of the quick and dead—

Know ye not that "the saints shall judge the world? shall judge Angels?" They "overcame by the blood of the Lamb," and "shall sit down with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his father on his throne.

* 1 Cor. 15. 42—44.

But how are these transformations to be effected? How? By that same "power" which " calleth things that be not as though they " were." God shall bring his risen ones with Jesus Christ. This is our short answer. I cannot open my ears to the objections of unbelief. We are upon too high ground to stoop to the caviller who marshals his ignorance and imbecility against the knowledge and might of God. Let him puzzle himself with his theories about personal identity—Let him talk about one part of the body interred in Asia, another in Africa, and a third in Europe—Let him ask as many questions as he can devise about limbs devoured by ravenous animals, and become, by nutrition, part of their bodies; which bodies again have passed, by the same process, into the flesh of other animals; and these, in their turn, consumed by man, and incorporated with the substance of a new human body—Let him ask such questions, and ten thousand like them. Has he done? " Dost thou not therefore err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God?" It will be time enough to plead thy difficulties when God shall commit to thee the raising of the dead. For us it is sufficient that he who rears up the living blade from the rotted grain, will be at no loss to rear up an incorruptible

from a corrupted body, through what forms and varieties soever it may have passed.

The main question, however, is not what Omnipotence *can* but what it *will* perform.—“That God should raise the dead,” if it so please him, will not appear “incredible,” to any sober man. But what proof have we that our faith on this head is not fancy; and that our hope shall not perish? The best of all possible proof.

We have, in the first place, the divine promise. God has engaged to “raise his people up by Jesus, and to present them together with him.” Jesus himself has said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead yet shall he live: and he that liveth and believeth on me shall never die.” A thousand scientific demonstrations are not equivalent, as the ground of our confidence, to one word of Him “who cannot lie.” And so we shall find it in our last extremity.

We have, moreover, the accomplishment, in part, of the promise already. For there are upon the sacred record many instances of resurrection from the dead.

We have, as a sure pledge of its full accomplishment in due season, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus himself. The fact is indisputable, and its consolation full.

(1) By his resurrection he *vanquished* Death.

He took away whatever gave to Death not only his sting but his empire. Therefore, saith the scripture, he “*abolished* Death ; and brought *life and immortality* to light through the gospel*.”

(2) As the Lord Jesus died, so he rose again, the head and representative of his redeemed. He bought them unto God by his blood ; and he came back from the grave to show that the ransom was accepted, and to prosecute the claim which he presented to the throne of God, as he was about offering his soul in their souls’ stead —“ Father, I will that they also whom thou “ hast given me be with me where I am that they “ may behold my glory†.” His resurrection, therefore, is a pledge from the living God to his church, to the universe, that all who die in faith shall rise in glory. Christ is the “ first-fruits”—His people, the harvest that shall follow—“ But every one “ in his own order, Christ the first “ fruits ; afterwards they that are Christ’s at his “ coming‡.” For this hour of joy and triumph is reserved the fulfilment of his gracious promise—“ Thy dead shall live—my dead body shall they “ arise§.” He owns them as his body even in their state of death : They shall hear his voice, “ Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust !” They shall answer him from their graves, and shall

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

† 1 Cor. 15. 25.

‡ John 17. 24.

§ Is. 26. 19.

come forth, the sons and daughters of immortality ; resplendent in his beauty, worthy of his kingdom. For he shall “ change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*.” This is *Christian* consolation ; This is *Christian* hope : Hope which all the crowns and treasures of earth are infinitely too poor to purchase or to balance. And it is hope that maketh not ashamed. “ For I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

In this faith the apostles laboured, and the martyrs bled. Ages have elapsed and it is still the same. It is not a distant wonder ; not a brilliant vision ; but a solid and present reality under the power of which at this moment, while the words are on my lips, Christians, in various parts of the world, are closing their eyes to sleep in Jesus. It has come home to our own “ business and bosoms.” It has chosen our own houses to be the scene of its miracles. But rarely does it fall

* Phil. 3. 21.

to the lot of human eyes to witness so high a display of its value and virtue, as was witnessed in that blessed woman whose entrance into the joy of her Lord has occasioned our assembling this evening.

As we are commanded to be “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*,” we should have their example before us, that we may learn to imbibe their spirit, to imitate their graces, and be ready for their reward. With this view permit me to lay before you some brief recollections of our deceased friend.

It is not my intention to relate the history of her life. That will be a proper task for biography. I design merely to state a few leading facts, and to sketch such outlines of character, as may show to those who knew her not, “what manner of person she was in all holy conversation and godliness.” Those who knew her best require no such remembrancer; and will be able, from their own observation, to supply its defects.

ISABELLA MARSHALL, known to us as MRS. GRAHAM, received, from nature, qualities which in circumstances favourable to their development, do not allow their possessor to pass through life unnoticed and inefficient.

* Heb. 6. 12.

An intellect strong, prompt, and inquisitive—a temper open, generous, cheerful, ardent—a heart replete with tenderness, and alive to every social affection, and every benevolent impulse—a spirit at once enterprising and persevering. The whole crowned with that rare and inestimable endowment, good sense, were materials which required only skilful management to fit her for adorning and dignifying any female station. With that sort of cultivation which the world most admires, and those opportunities which attend upon rank and fortune, she might have shone in the circles of the great, without forfeiting the esteem of the good. Or had her lot fallen among the literary unbelievers of the continent, she might have figured in the sphere of the Voltaires, the Deffands, and the other *esprits forts* of Paris. She might have been as gay in public, as dismal in private, and as wretched in her end, as any the most distinguished among them for their wit and their woe. But God had destined her for other scenes and services—scenes from which greatness turns away appalled; and services which all the cohorts of infidel wit are unable to perform. She was to be prepared by poverty, bereavement, and grief, to pity and to succour the poor, the bereaved, and the grieving. The sorrows of widowhood were to teach her the heart of the wi-

dow—her babes, deprived of their father, to open the springs of her compassion to the fatherless and orphan—and the consolations of God, her “refuge and strength, her very present help in “trouble,” to make her a daughter of consolation to them who were “walking in the valley “of the shadow of death.”

To train her betimes for the future dispensations of his providence, the Lord touched the heart of this “chosen vessel” in her early youth. The spirit of prayer sanctified her infant lips; and taught her, as far back as her memory could go, to “pour out her heart” before God. She had not reached her eleventh year, when she selected a bush in the retirement of the field, and there devoted herself to her God by faith in the Redeemer. The incidents of her education, thoughtless companions, the love of dress, and the dancing school, as she has herself recorded, chilled for a while the warmth of her piety, and robbed her bosom of its peace. But her gracious Lord revisited her with his mercy, and bound her to himself in an everlasting covenant which she sealed at his own table about the 17th year of her age. Having married, a few years after, Dr. John Graham, surgeon to the 60th British regiment, she accompanied him first to Montreal, and shortly after to Fort Niagara. Here, during four years of temporal pros-

perity, she had no opportunity, even for once, of entering "the habitation of God's house," or hearing the sound of his gospel. Secluded from the waters of the Sanctuary and all the public means of growth in grace, her religion began to languish, and its leaf to droop. But the root was perennial—it was of "the seed of God which liveth and abideth for ever." The sabbath was still to her the sign of his covenant. On that day of rest, with her bible in her hand, she used to wander through the woods, renew her self-dedication, and pour out her prayer for the salvation of her husband and her children. He who "dwelleth not in temples made with hands," heard her cry from the wilds of Niagara, and "strengthened her with strength in her soul."

By one of those vicissitudes which checker military life, the regiment was ordered to the island of Antigua in the West Indies. Here she met with that exquisite enjoyment to which she had been long a stranger—the communion of kindred spirits in the love of Christ: and soon did she need all the soothing and support which it is fitted to administer. For in a very short time the husband of her youth, the object of her most devoted affection, her sole earthly stay, was taken from her by death. The stroke was, indeed, mitigated by the sweet assurance that

He slept in Jesus. But a heart like hers, convulsed by a review of the past and anticipation of the future, would have burst with agony, had she not known how to pour out its sorrows into the bosom of her heavenly father. Trials which beat sense and reason to the ground, raise up the faith of the Christian, and draw her closer to her God. O how divine to have Him as the rock of our rest when every earthly reliance is “a broken reed!”

Bowing to his mysterious dispensation, and committing herself to his protection as the “Father of the fatherless and the husband of the widow,” she returns with her charge to her native land, to contract alliance with penury, and to live by faith for her daily bread. That same grace under whose teaching she “knew how to abound,” taught her also how “to suffer need.” With a dignity which belongs only to them who have treasure in heaven, she descended to her humble cot, employment, and fare. But her humility, according to the scripture, was the forerunner of her advancement. The light of her virtues shone brightest in her obscurity, and pointed her way to the confidential trust of forming the minds and manners of young females of different ranks in the metropolis of Scotland. Here, respected by the great and beloved by the good; in sacred inti-

macy with "devout and honourable women," and the friendship of men who were in truth "servants of the most high God," she continued in the successful discharge of her duties till providence conducted her to our shores. She long had a predilection for America, as a land in which, according to her favourite opinion, the church of Christ is signally to flourish. Here she wished to end her days and leave her children. And we shall remember, with gratitude, that in granting her wish, God cast her lot with ourselves. Twenty-five years ago she opened, in this city, a school for the education of young ladies, the benefits of which have been strongly felt, and will be long felt hereafter, in different and distant parts of our country. Evidently devoted to the welfare of her pupils—attentive to their peculiarities of character—happy in discovering the best avenue of approach to their minds—possessing, in a high degree, the talent of simplifying her instruction and varying its form, she succeeded in that most difficult part of a teacher's work, the inducing youth *to take an interest in their own improvement ; and to educate themselves by exerting their own faculties.*

In governing her little empire, she acted upon those principles which are the basis of all good government on every scale and under

every modification—to be *reasonable*, to be *firm*, and to be *uniform*. Her authority was both tempered and strengthened by condescension. It commanded respect while it conciliated affection. Her word was law, but it was the law of kindness. It spoke to the conscience, but it spoke to the heart ; and obedience bowed with the knee of love. She did not, however, imagine her work to be perfected in fitting her *élèves* for duties and elegance of life. Never did she forget their immortal nature. Utterly devoid of sectarian narrowness, she laboured to infuse into their minds those vital principles of evangelical piety which form the common distinction of the disciples of Christ, the peculiar glory of the female name, and the surest pledge of domestic bliss. Her voice, her example, her prayers, concurred in recommending that pure and undefiled religion without which no human being shall see the Lord.— Shall we wonder that her scholars should be tenderly attached to such a preceptress ? that they should leave her with their tears and their blessing ? that they should carry an indelible remembrance of her into the bosom of their families ? that the reverence of pupils should ripen with their years into the affection of friends ? and that there should be among them, at this day, many a wife who is “ a crown to her

“ husband ;” and many a mother who is a blessing to her children ; and who owes, in a great degree, the felicity of her character to the impressions, the principles, and the habits which she received while under the maternal tuition of MRS. GRAHAM ?

Admonished, at length, by the infirmities of age ; and importuned by her friends, this venerable matron retired to private life. But it was impossible for her to be idle. Her leisure only gave a new direction to her activity. With no less alacrity than she had displayed in the education of youth, did she now embark in the relief of misery. Her benevolence was unbounded, but it was discreet. There are charities which increase the wretchedness they are designed to diminish ; which, from some fatal defect in their application, bribe to iniquity while they are relieving want ; and make food, and raiment, and clothing to warm into life the most poisonous seeds of vice. But the charities of our departed friend were of another order. They selected the fittest objects—the widow—the fatherless—the orphan—the untaught child—and the ignorant adult. They combined intellectual and moral benefit with the communication of physical comfort. In her house originated the *Society for the relief of Poor Widows with small Children*. Large, in-

deed, is this branch of the family of affliction ; and largely did it share in her sympathy and succour. When at the head of the noble association just named, she made it her business to see with her own eyes the objects of their care ; and to give, by her personal presence and efforts, the strongest impulse to their humane system. From morning till night has she gone from abode to abode of these destitute, who are too commonly unpitied by the great, despised by the proud, and forgotten by the gay. She has gone to sit beside them on their humble seat, hearing their simple and sorrowful story—sharing their homely meal—ascertaining the condition of their children—stirring them up to diligence, to economy, to neatness, to order—putting them into the way of obtaining suitable employment for themselves, and suitable places for their children—distributing among them the word of God, and little tracts calculated to familiarize its first principles to their understanding—cherishing them in sickness—admonishing them in health—instructing, reproofing, exhorting, consoling—sanctifying the whole with fervent prayer. Many a sobbing heart and streaming eye is this evening embalming her memory in the house of the widow.

Little, if any, less is the debt due to her from that invaluable charity the *Orphan Asylum*. It

speaks its own praise, and that praise is hers. Scores of orphans redeemed from filth, from ignorance, from wretchedness, from crime—clothed, fed, instructed—trained, in cleanliness, to habits of industry—early imbued with the knowledge and fear of God—gradually preparing for respectability, usefulness, and happiness—is a spectacle for angels. Their infantine gayety, their healthful sport, their cherub-faces, mark the contrast between their present and former condition; and recal, very tenderly, the scenes in which they used to cluster round their patron-mother, hang on her gracious words, and receive her benediction.

Brethren, I am not dealing in romance, but in sober fact. The night would be too short for a full enumeration of her worthy deeds. Suffice it to say, that they ended but with her life. The sabbath previous to her last sickness occupied her with a recent institution—*A Sunday School for Ignorant Adults*; and the evening preceding the touch of Death, found her at the side of a faithful domestic, administering consolation to his wounded spirit.

Such active benevolence could hardly be detected in company with a niggardly temper. Wishes which cost nothing; pity which expires on the lips—"Be ye warmed, and be ye clothed," from a cold heart and an unyielding gripe,

never imprinted their disgraceful brand upon ISABELLA GRAHAM. What she urged upon others she exemplified in herself. She kept a purse for God. Here, in obedience to his command, she deposited "the first fruits of all her increase;" and they were sacred to his service, as, in his providence, he should call for them. No shuffling pretences, no pitiful evasions, when a fair demand was made upon the hallowed store; and no frigid affectation in determining the quality of the demand. A sense of duty was the prompter, candour the interpreter, and good sense the judge. Her disbursements were proportioned to the value of the object; and were ready at a moment's warning, to the very last farthing*. How pungent a reproof to those ladies of opulence and fashion, who sacrifice so largely to their dissipation or their vanity, that they have nothing left for mouths without food, and limbs without raiment! How far does it throw back into the shade those men of prosperous enterprise and gilded state, who, in the hope of some additional lucre, have thousands and ten thousands at their beck; but who, when asked for decent contributions to what they themselves acknowledge to be all important,

* The author knew her, when in moderate circumstances, to give, unsolicited, *Fifty pounds at once*, out of that sacred purse, to a single most worthy purpose.

turn away with this hollow excuse, "I cannot afford it!" Above all, how should her example redden the faces of many who profess to belong to Christ; to have received gratuitously from him, what he procured for them at the expense of his own blood, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" and yet, in the midst of abundance which *he* has lavished upon them, when the question is about relieving his suffering members, or promoting the glory of his kingdom, are sour, reluctant, mean! Are *these* the *Christians*? Can it be that they have committed their bodies, their souls, their eternal hope, to a Saviour whose thousand promises on this very point of "honouring *him* with their substance," have less influence upon their hearts and their hands than the word of any honest man? Remember the deceased, and hang your heads—Remember her, and tremble—Remember her, and "bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

In that charity also which far surpasses mere almsgiving, however liberal, the charity of the gospel, our friend was conspicuous. "The love of God shed abroad in her own heart by the "Holy Ghost," drew forth her love to his people wherever she found them. Assuredly she had in herself this witness of her having "passed from death unto life," that she "loved the

“brethren.” The epistle written not with ink, “but with the spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart : “yet read and known of all men :” that is, the Christian temper manifested by a Christian conversation, was to her the best letter of recommendation. Unwavering in her own faith as to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, she could, nevertheless, extend “love without dissimulation,” and the very bowels of Christian fellowship, to others, who, whatever might be their mistakes, their infirmities, or their differences in smaller matters, agreed in the great Christian essential of “acceptance in the Beloved.” Deeply did she deplore the conceit, the bigotry, and the bitterness of sect. O that her spirit were more prevalent in the churches ! that we could labour to abase our “crown of pride ;” to offer up, with one consent, upon the altar of evangelical charity, those petty jealousies, animosities, and strifes which are our common reproach ; and walk together as children of the same father, brethren of the same Redeemer, and heirs of the same salvation !

To these admirable traits of character were added great tenderness of conscience and a spirit of prayer. Her religion, not contented to “justify her before men,” habitually aimed at pleasing “God who looketh upon the heart.”

It was not enough for her to persuade herself that a thing *might* be right. Before venturing upon it, she studied to reduce the question of right to a clear certainty. How cautious, and scrupulous, and jealous of herself she was in this matter, they best can tell who saw her in the shade of retirement as well as in the sun-shine of public observation. Perhaps it is not going too far to say, that her least guarded moments would, in others, have been marked for circumspection. At the same time her vigilance had nothing austere, gloomy, constrained, or censorious: nothing to repress the cheerfulness of social intercourse; or to excite in others, even the thoughtless, a dread of merciless criticism after they should retire. It was sanctified nature moving gracefully in its own element. And with respect to the character and feelings of her neighbours, she was too full of Christian kindness not to “keep her tongue from evil, and her lips from speaking guile.”

These virtues and graces were maintained and invigorated by her habit of prayer. With the “new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” she was intimately familiar. Thither the “Spirit of grace and supplications” daily conducted her—There taught her to *pray*; and in praying to *believe*; and in believing to have “fellowship with the Father and with his

“Son Jesus Christ.” She knew her God as the God that heareth prayer ; and could attest that “blessed is she that believeth, for there shall be “a performance of those things which were “told her from the Lord.”

Under such influence her course could not but be correct, and her steps well ordered. The “secret of the Lord is with them that fear him ; “and he will show them his covenant—he will “guide them in judgment.” Thus he did with his handmaid whom he hath called home. Wherever she was, and in whatever circumstances, she remembered the guide of her youth, who, according to his promise, “never left her nor “forsook her ;” but continued his gracious presence with her when she was “old and gray-headed.”

You may perhaps imagine, that with such direction and support it was impossible she should see trouble. Nay, but “waters of a full cup “were wrung out to her !” She often ate the bread of sorrow steeped in wormwood and gall. Her heavenly father “showed her great “and sore adversities ; that he might try her as “silver is tried, and bring her forth from the furnace purified seven times.” It was during these refining processes that she found the worth of being a Christian. Though her way was planted with thorns and watered with her tears,

yet the candle of the Lord shone upon her head ; and from step to step she had reason to cry, “ Hitherto hath Jehovah helped ! ” In a word, like Enoch, she walked with God—like Abraham, she staggered not at his promise through unbelief—like Jacob, she wrestled with the angel and prevailed—like Moses, endured as seeing him who is invisible—like Paul, finished her course with joy. Blessed were the eyes of the preacher, for they saw the victory of her faith ; and his ears, for they heard her song of salvation. “ You can say with the Apostle, “ *‘ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him ? ’* ” “ O yes ! but I cannot say the other, ‘ *I have fought a good fight* ’—I must say, ‘ *I have fought a poor fight, I have run a poor race ; but Christ fought for me—Christ ran with me—and through Christ I hope to win.* ” “ But you have no fear, no doubts, about your going to be with Christ ? ” “ Oh no ! not a doubt ; I am as sure of that as if I were already in my Saviour’s arms.” It was her final conversation with children of the dust. The next day, “ when her flesh and her heart had so far failed,” that she was incapable of uttering a sentence ; she still proved her God to be the “ strength of her heart ; ” and knew him to be “ her portion for ever.”—I said to her, “ It is peace.” She

opened her eyes, smiled, closed them again, bowed her dying head, and breathed out, "Peace." It was her last word on this side heaven. The attending spirits caught it from her lips; and brought to her the next day permission to sleep in Jesus.

From this review allow me, brethren, to urge the *value of private exertions in promoting general good.*

In pursuing his *gratifications*, man is apt to look upon himself as a being of great importance: In fulfilling his *duties*, to account himself as nothing. Both are extravagancies which it will be his wisdom and happiness to correct. He is neither supreme in worth, nor useless in action. - Let him not say, "I am but one: My voice will be drowned in the universal din: my weight is lighter than a feather in the public scale. It is better for me to mind my own affairs, and leave these higher attempts to more competent hands." This is the language, not of reason and modesty, but of sloth, of selfishness, and of pride. The amount of it is, I cannot do every thing, "therefore I will do no thing"—But you can do much. Act well *your* part according to your faculties, your station, and your means.—The result will be honourable to yourself, delightful to your friends, and beneficial to the world. I advise not to

gigantic aims, to enormous enterprise. The world has seen but one NEWTON and one HOWARD. Nothing is required of you but to make the most of the opportunities within your reach. Recal the example of MRS. GRAHAM. Here was a woman—a widow—a stranger in a strange land—without fortune—with no friends but such as her letters of introduction and her worth should acquire—and with a family of daughters dependent upon her for their subsistence. Surely if any one has a clear title of immunity from the obligation to carry her cares beyond the domestic circle, it is this widow; it is this stranger. Yet within a few years this stranger, this widow, with no means but her excellent sense, her benevolent heart, and her *persevering will* to do good, awakens the charities of a populous city, and gives to them an impulse, a direction, and an efficacy, unknown before! What might not be done by *men*; by men of talent, of standing, of wealth, of leisure? How speedily, under their well-directed beneficence, might a whole country change its physical, intellectual, and moral aspect; and assume, comparatively speaking, the face of another Eden—a second garden of God? Why then do they not diffuse, thus extensively, the seeds of knowledge, of virtue, and of bliss? I ask not for their pretences; they are as old as the lust of lucre; and are re-

futed by the example which we have been contemplating—I ask for the true reason, for the inspiring principle, of their conduct. It is this—let them look to it when God shall call them to account for the abuse of their time, their talents, their station, their “unrighteous mammon.”—It is this: They believe not “the words of the “Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to “give than to receive**.” They labour under no want but one—they want *the heart!* The bountiful God add this to the other gifts which he has bestowed upon them! I turn to the other sex.

That venerable mother in Israel, who has exchanged the service of God on earth for his service in heaven, has left a legacy to her sisters—she has left the example of her faith and patience; she has left her prayers; she has left the monument of her Christian deeds: and by these she “being dead yet speaketh.” Matrons! has she left her *mantle* also? Are there none among you to hear her voice from the tomb, “Go and “do thou likewise?” None whom affluence permits, endowments qualify, and piety prompts, to aim at her distinction by treading in her steps? Maidens! Are there none, among *you*, who would wish to array yourselves hereafter in the honours of this “virtuous woman?” Your hearts

* Acts xx. 35.

have dismissed their wonted warmth and generosity, if they do not throb as the reverend vision rises before you—Then prepare yourselves now, by seeking and serving the God of her youth. You cannot be too early “adorn-
 “ed with the robes of righteousness and the
 “garments of salvation” in which she was wedded, in her morning of life, to Jesus the king of glory. That same grace which threw its radiance around her shall make you also to shine in the “beauty of holiness;” and the fragrance of those virtues which it shall create, develop, and ennoble, will be “as the smell of a field which
 “the Lord hath blessed.”

Yea, let me press upon all who hear me this evening, the transcendent excellence of Christian character, and the victorious power of Christian hope. The former bears the image of God; the latter is as imperishable as his throne. We fasten our eyes with more real respect, and more heart-felt approbation upon the moral majesty displayed in “walking as Christ also
 “walked,” than upon all the pomps of the monarch, or decorations of the military hero. More touching to the sense, and more grateful to high heaven, is the soft melancholy with which we look after our departed friend, and the tear which embalms her memory, than the thundering plaudits which rend the air with the name of

a conqueror. She has obtained a triumph over that Foe who shall break the arm of valour, and strike off the crown of kings. "The fashion of this world passeth away." Old Time approaches toward his last hour. The proudest memorials of human grandeur shall be food for the conflagration to be kindled when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. Then shall he be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." There are those, perhaps in the present assembly, who repute godliness fanaticism ; and the sobriety of Christian peace, the gloom of a joyless spirit ; but who cannot forbear sighing out, with the prophet of mammon, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." If they proceed no further their wish will not be granted. None shall die the death of the righteous, unless by a rare dispensation of mercy, who do not live his life. They only are fit to be with God, who love God and keep his commandments. In that day of transport and of terror which we shall all witness, how many of the thoughtless fair who now "sport themselves with their own deceivings," would give all the treasures of the East and thrones of the West, to sit with ISABELLA GRAHAM on the right hand of Jesus Christ ! If ye be wise betimes, ye may. "Now is the accepted time ;

“to day is the day of salvation.” The gospel of the Son of God offers you, at this very moment, the forgiveness of your sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. The blessing comes to you as a free gift—Accept it and live. Accept it and be safe. Accept it, and put away the shudderings of guilt, and the fear of Death. Then shall you too, like our friend, go, in due season, to be with Christ.

Your happy spirit shall rejoin hers in the mansions of the saved. God shall bring you in soul and body with her when he makes up his Jewels—Then shall he gather his elect from the four winds of heaven, shall perfect that which concerneth them, and make them fully and forever blessed. Be our place among them in that day!

FINIS.

